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WHAT SHOULD THE MODERN SECONDARY SCHOOL AIM TO ACCOMPLISH?

II.

To INSIST that the modern secondary school should minister to social aims does not mean that the secondary school should give a legal or political education, but it means that the school shall give a training that prepares for the duties of good citizenship; or, as it was phrased above, that prepares and stimulates the pupil to active and intelligent participation in promoting the welfare of society. Such preparation necessitates some comprehension of the nature of organized society, that is, of the institutions and activities which society maintains, encourages, and permits for its stability, perpetuity, and prosperity; that is, for the usefulness and happiness of its members. These institutions are, primarily, government or political institutions; industrial and commercial institutions and activities; and educational institutions. The education demanded by society, therefore, justly insists on instruction in subjects that acquaint the pupil with these activities and institutions, that develops an interest in them and the power to be of service in them. The principles and methods of municipal, state, and national government must be explained and made familiar to the pupil; he must also receive instruction that will help him to understand the complex relations of our modern industrial system; and he should know

something of the education by which society strives to conserve, improve, and transmit the progress it has made.

Some of this instruction is, as has been said already, partly and incidentally covered by courses in manual training and commercial courses; but it should be more directly and adequately provided for by courses in government and economics, or at least of industrial history, and by provision for some instruction in the history and present condition of education. Here, again, I wish to say that I am not unmindful of the existing provision for instruction in government and economics in secondary schools. My plea is for a more comprehensive and ultimately intensive study of these subjects, together with a much greater use of history in all its phases than, so far as I know, we have heretofore attempted anywhere. I am not pleading for forced exercises in the development of patriotism; but for exercises that shall reveal through the life struggles of our own and other nations, through the deeds and sacrifices of historical heroes, through a comprehension of the origin of our laws and our duty regarding them, the grounds on which a real patriotism is based. Such instruction can be safely relied on for the development of a real appreciation of the blessings of good government and an aversion to corruption and misrule that may furnish a strong incentive to action in municipal, state, or national affairs when the time for action comes.

> The recent campaign, among its most practical lessons, teaches most clearly that the enlightenment of the citizens is the most important of public duties and the main condition of continued freedom. All should, as far as possible, contribute to that education which extends the area, not of the license urged on by anarchists and the utopias pictured by socialists, but of liberty as developed healthily and steadily in obedience to the lessons of history and constructive thought.[1]

Such a result can be achieved only by recognizing that political and industrial or economic enlightenment necessarily go together. "Man is an economic animal as well as a political animal, and is therefore born into an industrial system as inevi-

[1] ANDREW D. WHITE, in the *Forum*, December 1896.

tably as he is born into a political state. Economic consciousness exists and will lead to economic action, just as surely as political consciousness has led to political action; and the question to be considered now is: How shall this economic conciousness best be enlightened and guided? Hitherto it has been left largely to the guidance of politicians, labor leaders, the press, and to the instructors in economics in the colleges and universities. And it must be admitted that for the future, also, by far the major part of the economic influence consciously exerted upon King Demos will continue to come directly from the first three of these four sources. They may be blind leaders of the blind, or the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, it matters not, the crowd will follow into the open ditch, or into the land flowing with milk and honey."[1] Shall we continue to delegate this instruction to such unenlightened, almost always prejudiced or partisan teachers?

Should we not rather provide in the secondary school for that great majority of our editors and politicians who are without a college education, the instruction that may help them to value a wise conservatism, and to recognize the comprehensiveness and the complexity of present-day political and economic problems and thus make them more intelligent and safer leaders of the people; and may we not hope through the same instruction to increase the number of men and women in the community who also appreciate the magnitude and difficulty of present-day problems and decline to be taken in by plausible but fallacious solutions? "As for the colleges and universities their ideal function is to be a guide to the guides, and they cannot be further considered here than to offer for them a fervent prayer, in passing, that they may be enabled to fulfill their ideal function."[1]

No function of society is capable of exerting a greater permanent influence on the social welfare than education. And in this country there is no social function of more vital concern to the people. Shall we continue to entrust the administration of this important function, both in the home and in the school, to

[1] H. W. THURSTON, in the SCHOOL REVIEW, IV, 604.

persons who have no preparation whatever to guide them? It seems to me that instruction in the history of education, and some instruction in the present problems of and present tendencies in education should be given in every secondary school. Such instruction would give a much-needed public insight into present educational aims and practices in the light of their historical evolution, and an intelligent interest in important contemporary problems. Besides, can any one doubt the beneficent influence of such instruction on the education of children in the home, and on the promotion of the much-needed effective and sympathetic coöperation between the home and the school, a coöperation which is as far removed from meddlesome interference on the one hand as it is from indifference on the other?

The intrinsic importance of the vocational and social aims are obvious. But another reason why so much stress has been laid on these aims is because through them alone is it possible in my opinion in many schools—for nearly half the pupils, I mean most of the boys—to realize culture aims. Girls and young women are attracted by the culture aims to a far greater extent than boys and young men. The boys have so many interests outside of the intellectual life of the school from which the girls are practically excluded, that for many of them the culture aims of the school shrink into insignificance; and their achievements, such as they are, are due chiefly to the insistence of parents and teachers, or to the influence of impending examinations for admission to college. The difference between the application and zest of boys and girls in the secondary school was well summed up in my presence by a high-school youngster who was twitted by a schoolmate, a girl, on the inferior achievements of the boys as compared with the girls. He said: "Hm, the girls have nothing else to do." It has seemed to me that the way to enable the boys to realize that for the time being they too *have nothing else to do*, is to connect the school interests with life interests; in other words, to so construct the school programmes that stress is laid throughout on the boy's vocational and social interests, so that these interests

shall come naturally and gradually to include the culture interests as well. And this, I think, is not difficult to do with a flexible and sufficiently comprehensive programme, as was recently suggested by Professor Felix Adler.

For example: The future artisan will be interested in the history of his craft; thence easily in the history of industry; thence, in its effect on the progress of civilization; thence in the political as well as industrial history of his race; that is to say, in the evolution of modern society with its contemporary industrial, economic, and political problems. History, economics, and government thus become interesting, because they may be shown to have an obvious relation to his dominant interest. Through history, the pupil may become interested in other peoples, with their literature and languages, and thus foreign languages may be and should be brought within the range of his interests. The obvious dependence of the thorough comprehension and pursuit of any trade on mathematics and natural science, leads to these sciences.

Again, the future merchant or manufacturer, whose business interests outweigh all other incentives to inactivity, should easily be led to take an interest in the business relations of his own city, town or state with other cities, towns and states, and thence, by any easy transition, to the commercial relations of his own country with foreign countries and to the leading interests of foreign nations. Before long the dependence of commercial and industrial activity on the form and structure, the physical features of the earth's surface and the raw materials of commerce and manfacturers, which his commercial interest finds worthy of consideration, may be used to lead the pupil to natural science, especially physiography and geology. Machinery for manufacture, and for transportation are incidentally interesting at first, because they constitute a part of the vast commercial activity to which the future merchant feels himself irresistibly drawn. Ere long, however, he finds that a comprehension of them depends on a satisfactory knowledge of mathematics and physical science. Everywhere money and credit are used to

carry on commercial enterprises. Banks and banking appear as important phases of commercial activity; so also are the relations of labor and capital, and contemporary schemes of coöperation. The government which furnishes the necessary guarantee of peace, and protection of property for the uninterrupted pursuit of all these commercial and industrial activities, is of interest because, once more, it is necessarily associated with his dominant commercial interest; and so the youth is led to study economics and civil government. Moreover the history of commerce and industry lead easily and naturally to the history of civilization. Commercial relations with other nations make clear the value of foreign modern languages, and these when once pursued, for whatever cause, may come to possess an interest of their own. A command of the mother tongues as the means of all communciation for business purposes, may be utilized to extend the knowledge of its literary resources, and thus bring to bear on the future merchant its far-reaching influences on aims, character, and tastes. Similarly the future artist, with his dominant æsthetic interest, may be led to take an interest in science, in mathematics, in history, and in language, because he finds in each of these subjects important assistance toward the cultivation of what he has most at heart.

Thus, by judiciously grouping the various subjects about a youth's vocational interests, he may be led, naturally and with the least resistance, to substantial achievement in all the fields of study open to him. He may be led to general culture, because these fields of study are shown to minister primarily to his vocational interests; because they make clearer the part he desires to play in the world, and strengthen his growing ability to sustain his part well, to do his chosen work well, and to find his way with increasing certainty through the complex affairs of modern social and political life. But also before long, we may hope, in most cases, because they afford that satisfaction which every human being feels in the enlargement of his mental horizon—because they bring within his reach the disinterested pleasures of science, history, literature, and art, and enable him

to pass through the world alive to its beauties, its marvelous system, and its unsolved mysteries.

So much for the vocational and social aims of secondary education for their own sake and for the use which could be made of them in the endeavor to realize the culture aims of the secondary school. I must make the most of the remaining time at my disposal for the discussion of these culture aims themselves. None of the aims of secondary education are more precious than these. I have already said that whatever functions may be attributed to the secondary school, none has been insisted on by the community with greater emphasis and permanence than that the secondary school should disseminate the elements of general culture among the people. The public high school has been called "the people's college;" and this designation is by no means to be considered as an atttempt to elevate the secondary school into a rank which it does not possess. Whatever of pretentiousness there may be occasionally in this term, in general, it expresses, merely, the cherished expectation that the high school shall disseminate the beginnings of a liberal education—the elements of general culture—among those whose time and means will not permit a higher education. And that the private secondary school exists for the avowed purpose of laying the foundations of general culture need hardly be mentioned.

But what is general culture? The almost universal meaning attached to the term until recently has been, acquaintance with the historical culture of the race, embodied in the languages, history, literature, and institutions of ancient Greece and Rome, together with some knowledge of mathematics; that is to say, general culture has been nearly synonymous with classical scholarship.[1] But a glance at modern courses of study in secondary schools and colleges, whether those courses of study are prescribed or elective, or a moment's reflection will show that the modern ideal of general culture is much broader than classical scholarship. It was natural that for a long time after the Renais-

[1] Classical scholarship meaning literary appreciation of the classics.

sance the minds of men should turn with delight solely to the ancient masterpieces of literature and art, and to the ancient civilizations. These were the only models from which the new literatures and the new civilization could receive inspiration and guidance; for modern literature and modern civilization had not then arisen. It is a truism to say that the range of life interests, the resources of civilization, have increased enormously since the Renaissance. While we feel on every hand the influence of classical traditions in our modern culture, and while, therefore, we can never dispense with classical scholarship as an element of general culture, it still remains true that a new culture and a new civilization have arisen since the Renaissance, and especially since the eighteenth century, which have their own sources of inspiration and guidance, and present their own problems for solution. *To be ignorant of these resources and problems is for the modern man to be out of relation with his time, is to miss general culture.*

The process of adjusting ourselves to this revised and enlarged conception of general culture is now going on. The old narrow ideal is tenacious of life. It is powerfully intrenched in existing courses of study, and in educational traditions; in particular, it is still sustained by collegiate preferences for classical courses in secondary schools; and lastly and chiefly, it is strong by virtue of real achievements in the education of many generations of men. But alone it can no longer suffice. *Tempora mutantur.*

Once more, then, what is general culture? It seems to me that our modern conception of general culture is primarily the comprehension and just appreciation of and the power to react on the resources and the problems of modern civilization. These resources and problems are found in the preservation and improvement of the health, physical vigor and physical well-being of the race; in modern governments; in modern industry and commerce; in modern literatures and languages — the record of the ideals and aspirations of the race in modern times; in history — the record of the achievements of the race; and in the

art treasures of all times. As I have just said, we can never exclude from the modern conception of general culture the influence of classical scholarship, but the place to attempt the realization of classical scholarship itself is, in my opinion, not the secondary school, but the college.

The importance of the modern culture in modern life is so comprehensive and so great that we should be false to our trust if we did not make adequate provision for it in the secondary school. At the same time, the pursuit of the classical languages —the only approximation to classical scholarship that can be profitably attempted in secondary schools—the pursuit of the classical languages is such a time-consuming pursuit as to very nearly preclude the serious pursuit of other subjects. This has become so obvious that the number of non-collegiate pupils who elect the so-called classical course, including both Greek and Latin, is constantly diminishing throughout the country, and the number is destined to decrease still more rapidly, as soon as the influence of collegiate preferences no longer makes Greek what a member of the Harvard faculty has called a "protected industry;" that is to say, if some colleges did not make it harder to get into college without Greek than with it. This protection cannot last long. Are we, then, in danger of losing the influence of classical antiquity in secondary education, as such, altogether? The reasons for this apprehension have already been indicated in what has gone before, but deserve explicit statement. They are the indisputable and superlative importance of modern culture, as distinct from classical culture, in modern life; and the equally indisputable fact that the attempt to achieve classical scholarship, together with the elements of modern culture, has already led to congested programmes. These congested programmes threaten to become worse.

We may as well admit that classical scholarship, *i. e.*, literary appreciation of the classics is not attainable in the secondary school. What is attainable is a fair to good elementary acquaintance with the classical languages which is a very different thing. This achievement, for many pupils, is important but, at present it

is not economically attained. Now, is it not true that what we value most in the classics for all secondary-school pupils who do not go to college, what we regard as most important, is to preserve the refining and enlightening influence of Greek and Roman thought, whether embodied in ancient art or literature, or institutions, on the thought and life of today, and of all time? It is my belief that this influence can be best realized, in secondary education, not primarily through an extended course in the classical languages, but through a serious study of history and art, together with translations of the classical literatures into the mother tongue, and other modern languages. If such study, preceded or accompanied by a *serious study* of the modern languages, be then followed by a brief course in one of the classical languages or both of them during the last year or two of the secondary school course, sufficient to enable a youth to realize the importance of these languages to a full comprehension of the history and structure of his mother tongue, and the significance of Latin and Greek in all advanced linguistic study the full educational value of the classics for secondary-school pupils would be economically and fully realized. What secondary-school pupil can appreciate Homer, Æschylus, or Demosthenes, Virgil, Horace or Cicero, in the original, as he can appreciate them in admirable translations. We have begun to recognize the magnificent possibilities of instruction in the language and literature of English speaking nations, for their own sake. Why should we not use the mother tongue also to bring the minds of our young boys and girls into actual touch with the inspiring writers of antiquity. What they now see "through a glass darkly," they would then see "face to face."

Here, then, we have in outline the scope of a modern secondary school, and, at the same time, some indication of the order of importance, objectively considered, which the several departments of work possess in the general scheme. The programme must contain certain prescribed studies, and also a considerable range of electives. Prescribed studies are needed, lest the pupil should miss vocational, social, ethical enlightenment,

on the one hand, and an appreciative understanding of nature on the other, together with the development of the corresponding powers; a considerable range of elective studies is required for the attainment of the elements of general culture, so far as that is not covered by a group of prescribed studies, and for the discovery and appropriate development of dominant interests and powers.

Besides possessing scope and flexibility, the programme should be closely articulated to the pupil's earlier course of study, should offer equal opportunities to all pupils, and should insist on adequate continuity and intensiveness in the pursuit of subjects once undertaken.

A secondary school with such a programme should also be, incidentally, a preparatory school; and I think it is safe to predict that ere long the colleges that fail to recognize the work of such a school, when well done, as suitable preparation for college courses, will be side-tracked; the main line of progress will lead past, instead of through, their doors.

The conception of the modern secondary school which I have endeavored to set forth in this paper, is that of a comprehensive institution; an institution that seeks to prepare the pupil, during the years from twelve to eighteen or nineteen, so far as possible, for life's duties, opportunities and privileges; an institution in which the various courses of study all minister to vocational, social, and culture aims; in which the teachers employ these courses of study to discover and develop the dominant interests of the pupils, and help each child to cultivate the powers which will enable him to pursue that calling for which he is best fitted by nature to his own best advantage and most acceptably to society.

The interpretation of general culture for which I have been contending as the aim in secondary education, is primarily the culture demanded by modern life.

By the close association of studies that minister chiefly to vocational and social aims, with courses of study that minister chiefly to culture aims, as such, the school should provide the

most favorable conditions for the vocational and social development of the pupil, and for the general cultivation of his mind and heart; we would thus endeavor to reach his whole nature, and to render him serviceable in the best sense at the same time to himself and to society. Through courses for the simultaneous pursuit of vocational, social, and culture aims, the secondary school may become, as it should, a guiding, inspiring, unifying force in American life. To bring to bear on the rising generation the influence of this force is the function which the modern secondary school should aim to fulfill.

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